

**CENTRAL BUSINESS
DISTRICT PLAN**

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

The Central Business District (CBD) is the heart of a community. It is the commercial, social, cultural and recreational center, and is the place where most people go to work. The CBD of many cities are facing the problem of deterioration because of the competition from outlying shopping centers. Automobile is the major means of transportation by most Americans today. And the CBD usually cannot provide enough parking spaces, and traffic circulation is often poor. It is quite evident that the CBD cannot compete with the shopping centers where there are ample off-street parking spaces, well landscaped and convenient traffic circulation.

The Central Business District of Firth consists of Block Numbers 33, 34 and a triangular block where the lumber yard is. It does not have the problems mentioned because the community is rather small. The traffic and parking problems are not evident, and there are no shopping centers to compete with. The greatest problem, however, is the deterioration of the commercial structures and the junk behind the business buildings. As a matter of fact, the CBD is the only major area in the whole community that has a substandard environment.

Existing Land Use

In order to analyze the existing conditions of the Central Business District, it is important to make an inventory of its land uses. Illustration 22 represents the existing

land use in the downtown area as of March, 1969. Land uses include residential, retail, service, public, warehouse and vacant lots. The survey showed a mixed land use pattern, vacant lots and inefficient use of spaces. The irregular block sizes and shapes of the CBD contribute in part to the inefficient use of spaces.

A total of 50 parking spaces are available in the downtown area at the present. A survey in March, 1969, also showed that during a regular business weekday, the parking spaces were not fully occupied. This is an indication that parking has not been a problem.

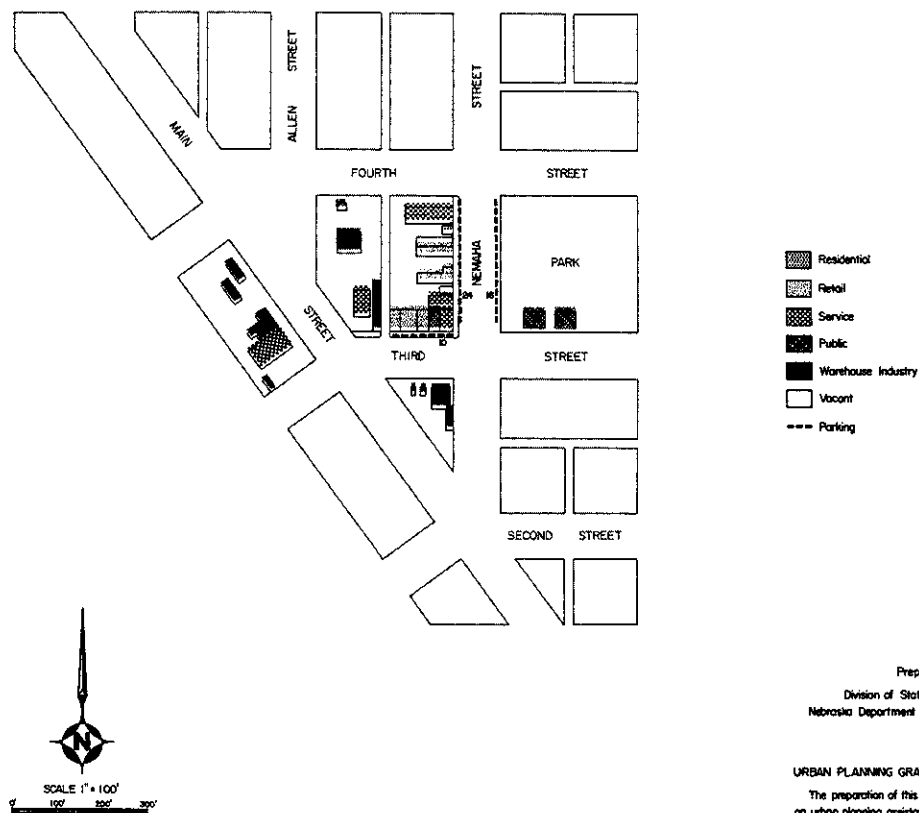
Condition of Structures

A building to building survey was also made on the structural condition in the CBD, and the result was summarized in Illustration 23. It reveals that 43 per cent of the buildings are in sound condition, 30 per cent deteriorated, and 27 per cent dilapidated. In other words, 57 per cent, or more than half of the structures, are substandard. The junk at the back of the commercial buildings makes the downtown area appear even more unsightly.

The other concern about the Firth downtown is the limited area for future growth. The location of downtown is such that the east is bounded by a park, the north by residential area, the west and south by the railroad. The possible area for expansion is the southwest where there is a vacant area. The dilemma of having limited area for expansion is offset somewhat by the vacant areas within the commercial blocks. In the Land Use Plan,

EXISTING LAND USE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

Illustration 22



Prepared by:
Division of State and Urban Affairs
Nebraska Department of Economic Development

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it was estimated that 1.4 acres of additional land will be needed by 1990, and the vacant land in the commercial blocks is adequate to take care of the projected needs.

Central Business District Improvement Plan

The main objectives of the proposed improvement plan are:

1. To provide additional parking spaces.
2. To improve traffic circulation.
3. To eliminate dilapidated buildings.
4. To upgrade deteriorated buildings.
5. To improve the CBD image.
6. To provide adequate commercial space for future needed businesses.
7. To improve the CBD within the financial ability of the Village.

Parking Spaces - As the population of the community grows, business activities will increase accordingly to satisfy the needs of the populace. Enough parking space is one of the most important factors in a successful downtown. The improvement plan retains the diagonal parking spaces on the commercial block west of Nemaha Street and north of Third Street. The parallel parking west of the park will be changed to diagonal parking so that additional spaces will be secured.

Off-street parkings are proposed on west and southwest of the main commercial block and also behind the commercial buildings. The proposed parking lots behind the business buildings can clean up the junks in that area and serve as the loading and unloading areas for some businesses. Sixty-two parking spaces are added as a result of this proposal.

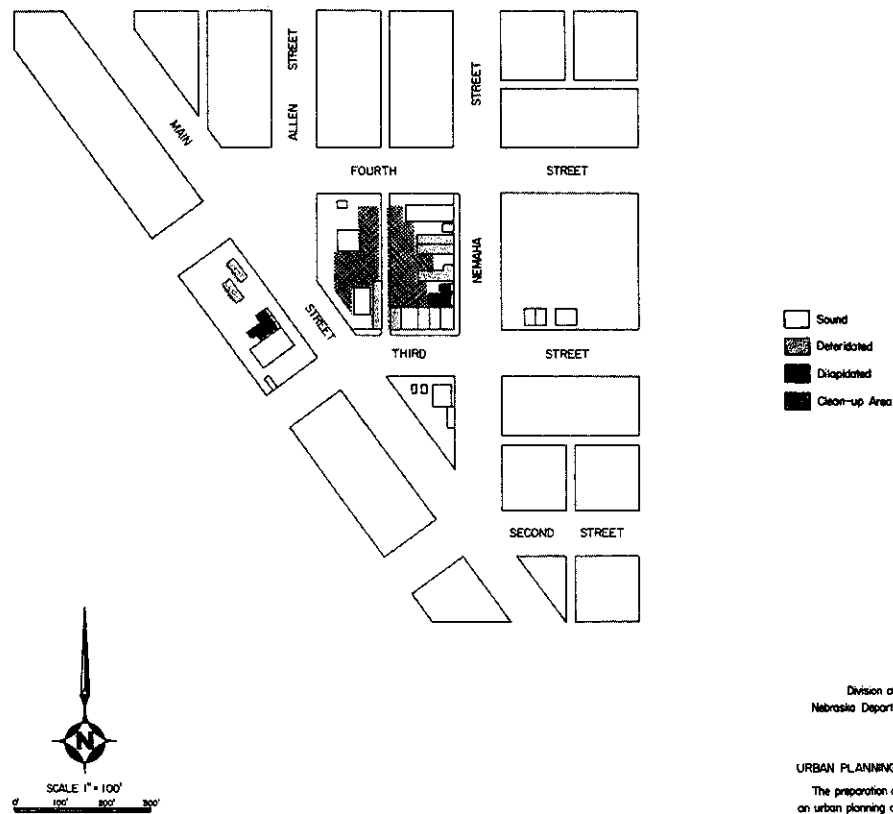
Traffic and Circulation - All streets around the CBD will be improved and paved according to the Transportation Plan. This will insure easy access to the CBD. The parking spaces on Nemaha Street are curvilinear to slow down the traffic in the block. A 5-foot median is placed on Third Street south of the commercial block to discourage U-turns. Sidewalks will be constructed on all business blocks for the convenience and safety of the pedestrians.

Buildings - The two buildings north of the bank and the structure north of the Co-op Building will be replaced by new commercial structures since they are considered to be dilapidated. The residential house south of the attorneys' office will also be replaced. Three completely new buildings are proposed, one north of the cafe, one north of the filling station, and one south of the lumber yard. These buildings are all for the expansion of existing businesses. The deteriorated buildings will be improved and upgraded accordingly.

Beautification - A small (0.4 acre) park is proposed at southwest of the lumber yard. It will be properly landscaped and planted with trees, shrubs and flowers. The park will be served as a buffer between the grain elevator and the business section, and a place for passive recreation. This park should be able to improve the CBD image greatly.

CONDITION OF STRUCTURES CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

Illustration 23



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All the CBD buildings will have a complete facelifting treatment. The rendering on the following page will show the end result of such improvement. A fountain will be built in front of the bank building which will be the focal point of the CBD area. Landscaping has been proposed in most parts of the CBD especially on the north and west of the main commercial block. This proposed improvement should given the customers a pleasing atmosphere comparable to a typical shopping center.

The Central Business District Improvement Plan as shown in Illustration 24, will be carried out in several phases so that the financial burden can be spread out in several years. The cost estimates and methods of financing will be outlined in detail in the Capital Improvements Program.

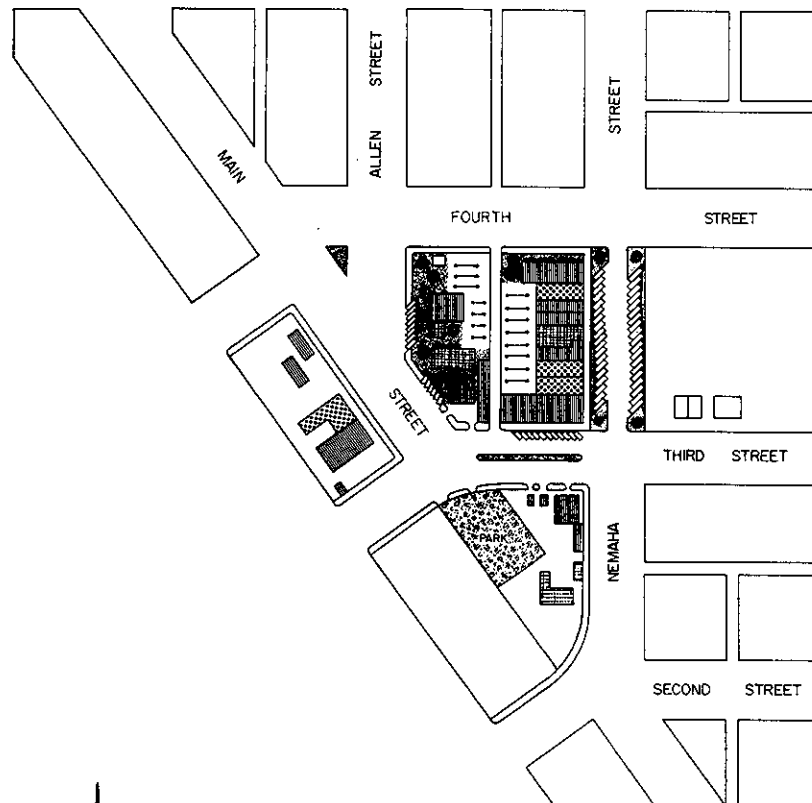
Long Range CBD Improvement Plan

As mentioned earlier, the existing downtown condition is rather poor, and there is limited area for expansion. Even though the proposed CBD improvement plan will be quite adequate for the next 20 years, for the long range purpose (50 to 100 years), a new site for downtown should be considered. A site north of Road 395 was suggested to the Village Board and the Planning Commission. This site is more centrally located with respect to the future growth of the community, and it can be designed in such a way that it will have ample off-street parking, drive-in banking facilities, pedestrian mall, and many other

desirable features of a modern day shopping center. If the population grows according to the projection, the proposed scheme of downtown improvement should be adequate. If the population exceeds the projection, then the plan for relocation of the CBD should be considered. In either case, the Planning Commission and the Village Board should work closely to determine appropriate action.

IMPROVEMENT PLAN CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

Illustration 24



- Existing Buildings
- Proposed New Buildings
- Replaced Old Buildings
- Proposed Park
- Land Scaped Area
- On-Street Parking
- Off-Street Parking

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FIRTH DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT